

Bring Your Own Idea
Proposal to the Provost's Office
Washington University in St. Louis

Sparkling Research on Educational Methods and Innovation

Steven D. Taff, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
Associate Director of Professional Education and Academic Affairs
Assistant Professor
Program in Occupational Therapy
Washington University School of Medicine

Regina Frey, PhD
Executive Director, The Teaching Center
Florence E. Moog Professor of STEM Education
Co-Director, The Center for Integrative Research on Cognition, Learning, and Education
Associate Professor
Department of Chemistry
Washington University

CV as Attachments

April 1, 2016

Sparking Research on Educational Methods and Innovation

Topic

We propose a “Bring Your Own Idea” that will provide a forum for faculty across the University focusing on an integral part of our work that is sometimes under-emphasized: investigating effective teaching and learning. The group will discuss various educational strategies and innovations and how these could be studied in multidisciplinary contexts to determine those that positively impact student engagement, motivation, and learning. The initial coordination supported through the “Bring Your Own Idea” structure is expected to lead to a variety of possible outcomes, such as: a standing interdisciplinary consortium for educational research and dissemination that spans the schools; multiple opportunities to partner in research or scholarship of teaching and learning projects of various scope; creating a workshop to assist faculty in designing Scholarship of Teaching and Learning projects, and/or development of a cross-disciplinary graduate-level course in educational research design and methods.

Justification

Educational research has been steadily growing as discipline-based subfields, as well as starting collaborations with cognitive-science researchers. Despite its inherent complexity, the field has been calling for more attention to all facets of research in education—“what works” in classrooms, theory development, comparisons across classrooms, enhancing the quality of instruction, and contributions towards evidence-informed practice and policy. Effective teaching requires practical application of new research or theory and an ensuing evaluation of whether or not the application is effective in the classroom environment. One key factor in determining the success of a given lesson or topic is whether the students were engaged and motivated, and therefore learning something that matters in their lives and future careers. Research on educational strategies and innovations is necessary to enhance both student learning and faculty teaching skills. Studies conducted by our Psychology Department and the Center for Integrative Research on Cognition, Learning, and Education provide a robust context for understanding cognitive processes and what we, as educators, can do to maximize student learning. This “Bring Your Own Idea” proposal seeks to create a cross-disciplinary network of faculty that builds upon this foundation, expanding it beyond STEM disciplines, and initiates a wide scope of educational inquiry projects that enhance our excellence in the classroom.

Logistics

The preferred style discussion is through informal gatherings over breakfast, lunch or late afternoon coffee/beverages. We propose an initial hour-long session in May 2016 with monthly follow-up meetings August through December. Group attendees will be polled for availability.

Invitees

Please refer to the attached list of invitees.

Arts & Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan Duchek, Associate Professor of Psychology • Mark McDaniel, Professor of Psychology • Julie Bugg, Assistant Professor of Psychology • Roddy Roediger, James S. McDonnell Distinguished Professor of Psychology
Brown School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lorien Carter, Assistant Professor of Practice
Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carolyn Dufault, Assistant Dean for Education • Allyson Zazulia, Professor of Neurology • Ida Fox, Assistant Professor of Surgery • Tammy Sonn, Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology • Lauren Milton, Instructor of Occupational Therapy
Sam Fox School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ken Botnick, Professor, Communication Design • Heather Corcoran, Director, College & Graduate School of Art, Jane Reuter Hitzeman and Herbert F. Hitzeman, Jr. Professor of Art